

Secretary Haig

A New Direction in U.S. Foreign Policy

April 24, 1981



United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

U. S. DEPOSITORY DOCUMENT
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Following is an address by Secretary Haig before the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, D.C., on April 24, 1981.

Some 100 days have elapsed since President Reagan's inauguration. In the field of foreign affairs, the first controversial steps have been taken. To paraphrase Mark Twain, these actions have pleased more than a few and astonished the rest. Although we have not remade the world, a new direction is evident.

We are acting to restore confidence in American leadership through a more robust defense of U.S. ideals and interests and a more realistic approach to the dangers and opportunities of the international situation. It is my purpose today to outline briefly the philosophy behind the new direction: this Administration's view of the realities of the world and the tasks before us.

A French statesman once remarked that the true business of government was to foresee problems and to administer appropriate remedies while time remained. In our approach to foreign affairs, we have sought to distinguish between the symptom of the problem and the problem itself, the crisis and its cause, the ebb and flow of daily events and the underlying trend. The problems that beset us are clearly symptomatic of deeper disorders, and it is to these fundamental movements of international politics that we must direct our remedies.

- Worldwide inflation, caused in part by astounding increases in the cost of oil, interrupts balanced economic growth essential to the aspirations of both developing and developed nations.

- Limited resources and political disturbance impede the eradication of hunger, poverty, disease, and other important humanitarian goals.

- Disruption from abroad threatens a more vulnerable West, as we draw energy and raw materials from regions in which the throes of rapid change and conflict prevail.

- Soviet military power grows relentlessly as Moscow shows an increasing readiness to use it both directly and by proxy and obstructs the achievement of a more just international order.

We must understand that these conditions are interrelated; they play upon each other; and the danger is therefore all the greater. If present trends are not arrested, the convergence of rising international disorder, greater Western vulnerability, and growing Soviet military power will undo the international codes of conduct that foster the peaceful resolution of disputes between nations. The symptoms of this breakdown—terrorism, subversion, and conquest—are already apparent. The ideals and safety of democratic societies are under assault.

Imaginative remedies might have prevented the current danger. Unfortunately, as these ominous developments gathered strength over the last decade, America's confidence in itself was shaken, and American leadership faltered. The United States seemed unable or unwilling to act when our strategic interests were threatened. We earned a reputation for "strategic passivity," and that reputation still weighs heavily upon us and cannot be wished away by rhetoric. What we once took for granted abroad—confidence in the United States—must be reestablished through a steady accumulation of prudent and successful actions.

Before others can repose confidence in us, we must ourselves be confident. The Reagan foreign policy therefore begins with a justifiable pride in our country, its ideals, and in its achievements. Government by the people and a society under law are great principles to defend. Regard for individual liberty at home translates into a concern for human rights abroad.

Moreover, we are fully conscious of our historic role in the defense of freedom. Together with our allies, we have shared peace and prosperity. The United States continues to be the natural anchor for the free societies of the Atlantic and Pacific. Our objective remains simple and compelling: a world hospitable to our society and our ideals.

Confidence in ourselves—the crucial psychological element in any foreign policy—is evident throughout President Reagan's program to restore confidence in American leadership abroad. Our actions are directed toward three projects:

First, to enlarge our capacity to influence events and to make more effective use of the full range of our moral, political, scientific, economic, and military resources in the pursuit of our interests;

Second, to convince our allies, friends, and adversaries—above all the Soviet Union—that America will act in a manner befitting our responsibilities as a trustee of freedom and peace; and

Third, to offer hope and aid to the developing countries in their aspirations for a peaceful and prosperous future.

The President has established clear priorities in the pursuit of these projects. Understanding that American economic weakness would cripple our efforts abroad, he has proposed a revolutionary program to restore inflation-free economic growth. This program recognizes that America's strength is measured not only in arms but also in the

spirit of individual enterprise, the soundness of the dollar, and the proper role of government in a free society.

Fundamental to this approach is also the belief that economic recovery must be accompanied by a prompt correction of defects in our military posture. For too long, we have ignored this fact: The military strength required by the United States can be achieved only through sacrifice and consistent purpose. We have proposed a heavy investment in our Armed Forces to assure safety for ourselves and the generations to come.

Our economic and military programs have not lessened the need for balanced economic and security assistance abroad. This helps allies and friends to join us in contributing to the general security. It also adds to the flexible instruments of influence required for a successful foreign policy.

These efforts to strengthen America's economic and military capabilities provide the foundation for an American diplomacy that includes the following aims: restraining the Soviet Union; reinvigorating our alliances; strengthening our friends; and a more effective approach to the developing countries.

Restraining the Soviet Union

A major focus of American policy must be the Soviet Union, not because of ideological preoccupation but simply because Moscow is the greatest source of international insecurity today. Let us be plain about it: Soviet promotion of violence as the instrument of change constitutes the greatest danger to world peace.

The differences between the United States and the Soviet Union concern the very principles of international action. We believe in peaceful change, not the status quo. The peoples of the world seek peace, prosperity, and social justice. This is as desirable as it is inevitable. The United States could no more stand against such a quest than we could repudiate our own revolution. We were the first to proclaim that individual liberty, democracy, and the rule of law provided the best framework for the improvement of the human condition. And we have led the attempt since the Second World War to maintain two principles of international action: the peaceful resolution of disputes and the proscription of outside intervention in the affairs of sovereign nations.

In contrast, Soviet policy seeks to exploit aspirations for change in order to create conflict justifying the use of force and even invasion. Moscow continues to support terrorism and war by proxy.

There is an additional dimension to the danger. In regions sensitive to Western interests, in the littorals of critical sea passages, in areas that hardly affect Soviet security, you will find Moscow taking a keen interest in conflict. Thus, Western strategic interests, as well as the hopes for a more just international order, are at stake.

Our objective must be to restore the prospects for peaceful resolution of conflict. We can do this by demonstrating to the Soviet Union that aggressive and violent behavior will threaten Moscow's own interests. We can do this by demonstrating, as we are doing in El Salvador today, that a government bent on making necessary reforms will not be overthrown by armed intervention supported by Moscow or its surrogates. We can do this by never accepting the Soviet occupation of other countries, such as Afghanistan.

Only the United States has the pivotal strength to convince the Soviets—and their proxies—that violence will not advance their cause. Only the United States has the power to persuade the Soviet leaders that improved relations with us serve Soviet as well as American interests. We have a right, indeed a duty, to insist that the Soviets support a peaceful international order, that they abide by treaties, and that they respect reciprocity. A more constructive Soviet behavior in these areas will surely provide the basis for a more productive East-West dialogue.

Reinvigorating Alliances

Another essential element in the restoration of our leadership is the strengthening of our alliances. From the outset of this Administration, we have placed a high priority on repairing the damage done to these alliances in recent years. Rebuilding alliance solidarity is a precondition for redressing the East-West military imbalance and for constraining Soviet international behavior.

Perhaps the most useful concept to govern these critical relationships is "consultation." Consultation should mean more than the formal act of soliciting opinions. It suggests what alliances really mean: shared interests, reliable performance, and sensitivity to each other's concerns.

We have acted to restore consultation as a useful instrument of alliance communication and solidarity. President Reagan's numerous meetings with heads of state and foreign ministers, as well as my own, have been marked by refreshing exchanges of views. A warm welcome awaits a United States willing to listen before it acts.

We are moving already beyond exchanges of views toward common strategic perceptions and concrete acts. We and our allies are taking common steps to restrain Soviet aggression and to restore our strength.

- On Poland, we have collectively sent a firm signal to the Soviet Union. The Soviets are now well aware that intervention would bring severe and lasting consequences. Indeed, the restraint we have seen offers some evidence of the benefits of alliance cohesion and resolve. Simultaneously, the West is working together to help the Polish people economically, so they can deal with their own problems.

- On theater nuclear forces, we and our allies have reaffirmed our commitment to modernization of NATO's theater nuclear capabilities based on NATO's so-called two-track decision of 1979. We will also make a serious effort to pursue European theater nuclear arms control with the Soviets.

- In critical regions such as the Middle East and Southwest Asia, we have launched a new, intensive effort aimed at achieving common approaches to protect our vital interests and to help assure peace. At a meeting of allies interested in southern Africa earlier this week in London, we began to reach consensus on a realistic and fair approach to the important problem of Namibia.

- On economic challenges, we are all experiencing slower growth and high inflation. Here again we understand that international cooperation is essential to solve each of our national problems. For example we have reaffirmed our belief in free trade as we consult with Japan to alleviate the plight of the auto industry in the United States.

Looking toward the NATO ministerial meeting early next month and the Ottawa economic summit in July, the most advanced nations in the world are coming together to meet the challenge from Soviet expansionism, regional instability, and economic interdependence.

Strengthening U.S. Friends

The reinvigoration of our alliances must be accompanied by the strengthening of our friends as well. This is particularly important in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, a region where violent action by the Soviet Union and its surrogates demands a more effective Western response.

The President's purpose in sending me recently to the area was to seek the wisdom of our friends on the issues of peace and security. But he also sent a message. The United States is fully cognizant of regional complexities and the necessity to proceed with the peace process. At the same time, we are determined to strengthen our friends and to work with them against the threat posed by the Soviet Union and its surrogates. These great projects must go forward together if we are to shake off our reputation for strategic passivity in the area and safeguard Western interests.

Fresh Approach to Developing Countries

Restraint of the Soviets, the reinvigoration of our alliances, and the strengthening of our friends are crucial aspects of the Reagan foreign policy. But the underlying tensions of international affairs go beyond the themes of allies and adversaries. A fresh American approach to the developing countries is essential if we are to treat the roots of international disorder.

The developing countries, sometimes grouped together as the Third World, are a vastly varied multitude of states, most of them beset by severe economic and political problems. What once united them—the memory of colonialism—is fading. The new emphasis is on the future, not the past.

The West in general and the United States in particular hold the key to that future. It is we who demonstrate by our own history how to combine freedom and development, political stability and economic progress. Two guidelines should govern our actions.

- We must show that friends of the United States benefit from our friendship, even in the face of Soviet-supported intervention.

- We must offer hope that the United States and its allies are not some form of closed club, hostile to the problems and frustrations attending development.

Our record on the issues of increasing concern to the future of the developing countries offers a sharp contrast to that of the East. We support economic development; the East does not. We assist the refugees; the East refuses relief. We offer the peaceful mediation of dispute; the East offers only arms of conflict. The developing countries are beginning to recognize where their best hopes lie, and it is in both the interests of humanity and our own national security that we promote such a trend.

In reviewing the causes of the Second World War and prospects for peace in the future, Winston Churchill concluded: "How absolute is the need of a broad path of international action pursued by many states in common across the years, irrespective of the ebb and flow of national politics."

As we enter the final decades of the 20th century, it is the task of the United States to lead the pursuit of this broad path, beckoning toward a more peaceful and prosperous international order. Knowledge of the obstacles before us will protect us against false optimism. Knowledge of ourselves will protect us against despair. Our difficulties will not disappear overnight. Yet we should not dwell too much on the troubles of the moment. The free nations of the Atlantic and the Pacific represent the greatest concentration of talent and wealth in the world. We are a community of peoples devoted to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Our prospects are bright. Only constancy of purpose is required to preserve successfully the liberty that is the treasure of our civilization. ■

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